ABORIGINAL BUSINESS: CELEBRATED IN ALBERTA

MARCH 2013

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

Supporting Aboriginal economic development is an important part of what we do at Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC). When we increase Aboriginal participation in the economy we improve the well-being and quality of life of Aboriginal people in Canada, ensuring Canada's future economic prosperity.

AANDC is the lead department responsible for carrying out the Government of Canada's Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development. Launched in 2009, the framework uses a modern and comprehensive approach to seize opportunities and build strategic partnerships with Aboriginal groups, the private sector, and provinces and territories. The expected outcomes of our strategies are opportunity-ready Aboriginal communities, viable Aboriginal businesses and a skilled Aboriginal workforce.

The Government of Canada is following through on its framework commitment to deliver programming that responds to both new and changing economic conditions and the unique needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Going forward, federal programs that support Aboriginal economic development will be more opportunity-focused, and investments will be targeted at those opportunities with the greatest likelihood to result in jobs and economic growth for Aboriginal people and communities, including their participation in major projects across Canada.

Over the long term, by focusing on opportunities, responding to new and changing conditions, leveraging partnerships and focusing on results, the Government of Canada, Aboriginal Canadians and other partners will work together to ensure that Aboriginal Canadians enjoy the same opportunities for employment, income, and wealth creation as other Canadians.

In the immediate time, AANDC continues to proudly sponsor two Alberta Business Awards of Distinction: the Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice Award of Distinction, awarded to a mainstream company that is a leader in its corporate policies regarding Aboriginal relations and practices; and the Eagle Feather Business Award of Distinction, awarded to an Aboriginal-owned business working to improve the lives of its employees and peoples. The following is a short telling of this year's inspiring and impressive finalists.

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THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice Award finalist

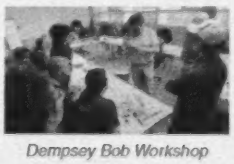
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

Opening the door to university for Aboriginal people

With strategic priorities that include developing more services for Aboriginal learners, building strong partnerships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups and meeting the distinctive learning needs of Aboriginal people, Athabasca University's commitment to Aboriginal students and communities is built into its core business.

"Our mission as an online, distance university is to break down barriers to post-secondary education," said Athabasca University President Dr. Frits Pannekoek. "We facilitate learning for people who live in remote locations and can't relocate to go to university along with groups who are sometimes underrepresented in academia. For these reasons, providing educational and community services to Aboriginal people is fundamental to our mission."

While instruction is primarily done through online and distance delivery, the university has also collaborated with several Aboriginal colleges in Alberta to offer courses on-site in Blue Quills First Nations College (St. Paul), Yellowhead Tribal College (Edmonton), Red Crow College (southern Alberta) and Northern Lakes College (campuses throughout northern Alberta). In partnership with over 20 Aboriginal communities in northern Alberta, the university's Learning Communities Project has created a community-based learning model that increases educational opportunities for the members of these communities and allows them to stay in their communities while they study. By extension, the project improves the economic and social well-being of these learners and their communities.



Dempsey Bob Workshop

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Opening ceremony for the Centre for World Indigenous Knowlege and Research

Online and on-site course offerings go a long way in meeting the needs of students, but for some, that's not enough. One of the barriers that often prevents people from attending university is cost. Athabasca University reduces the financial barrier for Aboriginal students through awards that are often forged through partnerships and that are specifically for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners, such as the $2,500 Syncrude/Athabasca University Aboriginal Scholarship.

The university's Indigenous Studies courses are written by First Nations, Métis and Inuit authors and are of value both to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners including persons working with and for Aboriginal organizations. Part of this value-added support and experience comes from the Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge and Research (CWIKR), which works to protect, preserve and strengthen Indigenous knowledge and research at the university. CWIKR has helped guide the university in the development of over 20 undergraduate courses in areas such as Aboriginal business, management, governance, law, resistance and the Cree language. Another way Indigenous research has been strengthened at the university is through the work of associate professor Dr. Tracey Lindberg. Dr. Lindberg was awarded a Canada Research Chair in Traditional Knowledge, Legal Order and Laws in 2010.

Chief Deborah Chief receiving her Master of Business Administration from Athabasca University President Frits Pannekoek

The above initiatives have reinforced the university's bonds with Aboriginal groups, laying the groundwork for future success in their collaborations, and they've contributed to a marked increase in the number of Aboriginal student enrollment. From 2007-2008 to 2011-2012, the number of undergraduate students increased from 876 to 1,046, a 20 percent increase. In that same time period, the number of graduate students increased from 50 to 90, which represented an 80 percent increase.

"Education has a transformative effect on those who are fortunate enough to gain access to it," said Pannekoek. "These initiatives are truly changing the lives of Indigenous students, and they're one of the aspects of Athabasca University that give me great pride."

Athabasca University

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

Aboriginal Relations Best Practice Award finalist

PDC-CNC LP

Committed to quality and a generation of healing

Primco Dene Catering and Canada North Camps (PDC-CNC LP) are catering and camp business partners working collaboratively to provide quality food services in the oil and gas industry in northeastern Alberta and to have Aboriginals more greatly represented in the service sector. Of its 800 employees, approximately 600 are of Aboriginal ancestry.

Primco Dene Ltd. is the management company for a group of companies owned by Cold Lake First Nation. About five years ago, two of these companies, Primco Dene Catering and Canada North Camp, undertook a business partnership to collectively focus on superior food quality, exceptional service and reasonable prices specifically for those working in the oil and forestry fields.

Above, left: Graduation of camp and catering program
Above, right: Dorms donated to Blue Quills First Nations College

Two years ago, the companies joined forces with Blue Quills First Nations College in an effort to benefit underemployed Aboriginal students with a Camp and Catering Program. The college designed a program that would give students life skills and essential work training based on a camp setting – in this case an actual camp donated by PDC-CNC LP. Upon successful completion of the program, students are assisted in securing employment and are offered after-program support. Individuals who have never before worked suddenly find a sense of pride and purpose in joining the camp and catering workforce.

Paul McCracken, president of PDC-CNC LP and a former educator, summed up the collective success this way: "Education is one of the keys to workplace success. Our company believed we needed a grassroots team, and we searched out that community-based team. Our partnership allowed for building nation capacity and working with other industry partners, including post-secondary institutions, in this case, Blue Quills First Nations College. The vision for a deeper sense of community-based change allowed the collective partners – Canada North Camps, Primco Dene, Blue Quills First Nations College, federal and provincial funders and CNRL – to come together."

This is only part of the program's aim, however. Students learn about their own identity and history, and how to deal with addictions. Students participate in sweat lodges, pipe and smudge ceremonies to help them see past their barriers, ultimately leading to significant personal growth and development.

"It's a matter of thinking outside the box, getting the right people around the table, focusing on relational leadership, and digging in to create school-to-employment success," said McCracken. "We are very appreciative of all of our partners ... it's a win-win. Industry wins, and most importantly, the nations win. What is necessary is a grassroots, humanistic approach to creating this success. This would not have been possible without the front-line, practical leadership of our Vice President of Operations, Mr. Brett Meredith, and Primco Dene's Vice President of Operations, Ms. Tammy Charland-McLaughlin."

PDCNC

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION
Aboriginal Relations Best Practice Award finalist

ROYAL BANK OF CANADA

Establishing, fostering and celebrating relationships with Aboriginal peoples

The Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) is proud to showcase its direct support to successful Aboriginal businesses in Alberta and across Canada. The bank's innovative approach stems from a memorandum of understanding signed with the Assembly of First Nations in 2007. It is truly an agreement to celebrate, as it helped to establish a foundation that has benefitted many Aboriginal communities over the years.

National Aboriginal Day in Edmonton

"RBC understands that Aboriginal peoples have a proud history of engaging the talents of community members and fostering a culture of partnerships for the future," said RBC President and Chief Executive Officer Gordon M. Nixon.

RBC has over 100 branches in Alberta situated in both the major urban centres and rural areas. It was the first financial institution to open an on-reserve branch, fully staffed by Aboriginal employees. RBC is also the first financial institution to offer telephone banking services in Cree and Inuktitut. It is committed to serving Aboriginal governments, communities, organizations, businesses and individuals by addressing issues and opportunities that are important not only to Aboriginal peoples, but all Canadians. Understanding and drawing on the strength of diversity require fully engaging the talents of all people to reflect and address the needs of the communities being served.

"We are committed to working with our First Nation, Métis and Inuit partners to help them access capital, for economic development, housing, infrastructure and whatever other needs the community may have," said Brian Hjlesvold, Manager of Aboriginal Banking for Alberta, Northwest Territories and Yukon. "Together, we can succeed as long as we understand each other's needs and develop relationships based on mutual respect and trust."

The Royal Eagles group in Edmonton hosting a National Aboriginal Day barbeque

With over 4,500 employees in Alberta, RBC has an extensive presence in the province. It works hard to increase the number of self-identified Aboriginal employees, which makes up two percent of staff. This is done through a number of initiatives like the Aboriginal Workforce Strategy, and through an annual $4,000 Aboriginal post-secondary education scholarship awarded to Aboriginal students over a four-year period.

Hjlesvold is also proud to be part of RBC's internal Royal Eagles employee resource group, which consists of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees who work together to ensure Aboriginal culture and its people are celebrated for their many contributions to Canadian society. "This committee is important to RBC, because it allows the Aboriginal employees to network, share ideas and give back to the community," said Hjlesvold.

An excellent example of RBC's positive outreach within the urban Aboriginal community is how each year in June the Edmonton chapter donates all proceeds from its National Aboriginal Day barbeque to the Amiskwaciy Academy High School's hot lunch program for the entire year, which for the past 10 years has represented over $40,000. Another example is how both the Edmonton and Calgary chapters donate over $10,000 and their time to each city in order to fill back packs with much needed school supplies. Together in partnership with the Edmonton Canadian Native Friendship Centre and the Calgary Urban Society of Aboriginal Youth they ensure that Aboriginal children have a good start towards their new school year.

The Backpack Program, supported by the Royal Eagles, puts together backpacks filled with school supplies and provides a new set of clothes for Aboriginal children in need

RBC provides an annual Aboriginal Partnership Report to highlight successful ventures throughout Canada. An excellent Alberta success story is how, through the financial support of RBC, the Heart Lake First Nation was able to transform future casino revenues into a new community centre. "The RBC team undertook an assessment of the First Nation, which indicated that not only was strong management in place, but that future revenues of the First Nation Development Fund could and would be directed to an RBC account to support any additional financing request," said Commercial Account Manager for Aboriginal Markets Syrena Courtorielle. "With this, we were able to secure the original financing as well as additional financing at a later stage."

Through innovative approaches, RBC continues to make loans to businesses and individuals less onerous through agreements with national and provincial Aboriginal organizations to promote strong communities and economic empowerment. These include the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association, the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association and the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation. Regional Aboriginal economic development officers were assisted through support from the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers annual general meeting and conference.

RBC will continue to partner with Aboriginal communities through relationships based on understanding, trust and respect to assist in the journey toward economic sustainability and prosperity. By empowering Aboriginal peoples, it strengthens their communities and Canadian society as a whole.

RBC

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

Aboriginal Relations Best Practice Award finalist

SAVANNA ENERGY SERVICES CORP.

Continuing a tradition of partnership

Savanna Energy Services Corp. is a company committed to Aboriginal involvement in its operations. Savanna takes great pride in being considered an industry-leading company in Aboriginal partnerships and understands the need to promote and continually maintain its positive and respectful relations with its partners.

Based in Calgary, Alberta, Savanna Energy Services Corp. has head offices in Houston, Texas and Brisbane, Australia and several field offices throughout Canada, the United States and Australia. The company's focus is strictly oilfield services via conventional drilling, horizontal drilling, well servicing and oilfield rentals. Savanna's fleet of drilling and well servicing rigs is among the newest in the world. The company's commitment to talent and technology has allowed for a strong foothold within Canada enabling expansion of its customer base to international markets.

This level of success, however, would not have been possible without partnership – specifically, Aboriginal partnership. For over a decade, Savanna has operated drilling and services rigs in partnership with Aboriginal communities throughout Alberta. The company's first equal rig partnership was created in 2001 with the Dene Tha' First Nation, with its most recent partnership made with the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation. These partnerships have at once benefitted Savanna in the implementation of its vision and values and its Aboriginal partners through the creation of investment, training and employment opportunities.

Trainees receiving instruction at Savanna training site

"Savanna is proud of the business and employment relationships we have built with Aboriginal communities throughout Western Canada," said Savanna President and CEO Ken Mullen. "These ventures have contributed substantially to Savanna's success over the years, and are clear proof that strong community, strong cooperation and good business can create success in the same arena. We continue to work with existing Aboriginal partners to expand these programs for our mutual benefit."

Aboriginal partner field trip at Savanna training site

One thing that arguably made success with the joint ventures all the more possible was the staffing of a First Nations member for the position of Business Development and Partner Relations Manager. This individual plays a vital role towards the cohesiveness of the partnerships and is responsible for ensuring that relations between Savanna and the Aboriginal communities it's tied to remain strong. Savanna also employs a Partner Relations Coordinator, also First Nations, who specifically focuses on administration, community relations and marketing.

Savanna's Aboriginal Employment Program was created to introduce members of the partner communities to the energy services industry. This program comprises a four-day course that overviews the prescreening and interview process, obtaining the various certifications required to work in the industry, learning of theory and practice of safety which includes introduction to the rig and its inner workings, with a final day of teachings on the work flow of the rig. This program combined with comprehensive informal company-sponsored career development courses assist with employee retention and satisfaction.

Over the years, Savanna has remained active in and supportive of Aboriginal educational initiatives and community development and events in an effort to promote and maintain what has become, and what will continue to be, a highly regarded and highly rewarding relationship.

Savanna Energy Services Corp

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

Eagle Feather Award finalist

BLOOD TRIBE AGRICULTURAL PROJECT & ITS AFFILIATED ENTITIES

Keeping agriculture thriving in southern Alberta

The Blood Tribe Agricultural Project (BTAP) is located on the Blood Tribe Reserve in southern Alberta. Incorporated in 1991, BTAP aims to promote, encourage and enhance agricultural investment in the Blood Tribe, and to create incentives for investment and job creation.

The mission of BTAP is to continue to expand relationships and seek new investment, markets, technology, and management expertise to contribute to growth in the Blood Tribe economy. BTAP is 100 percent owned and operated by Blood Tribe membership, with its produce fully grown on Blood land. The Blood Tribe describes the arrangement "as a tree holding all the branches together. We communicate across each branch to be sure everything is running smoothly, and do our best to help every branch meet their customer's needs."

In this endeavour, the Blood Tribe works with several entities to improve the well-being and wealth of its members:

- Aohkii Investment Property Management oversees 12 subsidiary companies that lease out lands, pumps and pivots on behalf of BTAP to end users. Aohkii negotiates, executes and monitors lease agreements, and pursues profitable investment of real assets including lands, capital facilities and equipment.
- Blood Tribe Forage Processing Plant grows premium-grade timothy hay for domestic and international markets. The hay is grown on 6,000 acres of irrigated land within a larger 25,000-acre irrigation project. The business is able to process more than 10,000 metric tons of hay per season.

Mataki Farms potato projects

- Mataki Farms Infrastructure Project farms 18 centre-pivot irrigated fields with a total of 2,262 acres under cultivation, with a 10,000-ton storage capacity potato warehouse and a wash and pack warehouse used for seed potatoes.
- Sawkee Feedlot has pens with a capacity to hold 2,500 head of cattle, silage storage, a sick bay and handling facilities, a feed mill and a feedlot pump house.
- Blood Band Ranch has 19,000 grazing acres capable of sustaining 1,000 head of cattle. The ranch works in conjunction with Sawkee Feedlot to raise natural beef that is marketed locally, nationally and internationally.

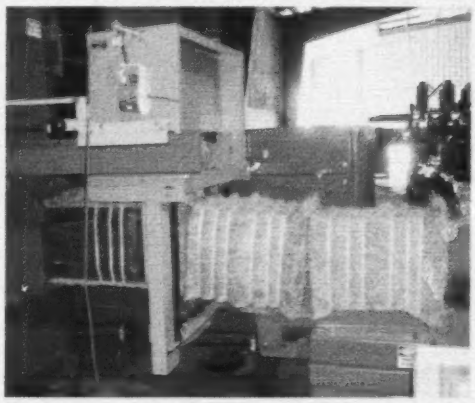
Forage processing plant

"The Blood Tribe Agricultural Project & Its Affiliated Entities are recognized as a self-sufficient world leader in agricultural production through its world class irrigation project, which is the largest operation in Western Canada," said Calvin Cross Child, CEO and General Manager of BTAP. "We are an industry that is innovative in seizing evolving market demands for agricultural products and services within an environment that fosters prosperity and opportunity for the entire value of Blood Tribe lands, thus, creating benefits for all Blood Tribe membership and establishing strong strategic partnerships with our valued customers in the surrounding communities of southern Alberta and the world markets."

Currently, BTAP & Its Affiliated Entities are in expansion mode, with demand high in both domestic and foreign product markets for their timothy hay, a highly nutritious food source for animals. BTAP is the only First Nation in Canada exporting agricultural products to international markets.

BTAP & Its Affiliated Entities conduct operations in an environmentally responsible manner. A commitment to environmental stewardship ensures that conservation, restoration, enhancement and sustainability of air, water, soil, energy and biotic resources are taken into account when evaluating business activities.

"I am honoured that Blood Tribe Agricultural Project is a finalist for this prestigious award," said Cross Child. "We do not seek recognition but sincerely appreciate the acknowledgment of our work and the team we have on staff, management, the Board of Directors of BTAP, BTAP & Its Affiliated Entities shareholders, which are Blood Tribe Chief and Council, and the many other people who help and support our projects."



Compressed bales

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION
Eagle Feather Award finalist

ICEIS SAFETY CONSULTING LTD.

Helping prepare Aboriginal people for meaningful employment

ICEIS Safety is a full service occupational health and safety training and consulting company based in Fort MacKay, Alberta. Its suite of services includes safety staffing and consultation, industrial and safety supplies, and robust safety and occupational training with courses available onsite, at its training centre in Fort MacKay, or online.

Massey Whiteknife, a member of the Mikisew Cree First Nation in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, is the president and sole owner of ICEIS Safety. He has 15 years of expertise in the construction and oilfield industries and began his business in 2005 when he was a safety officer working for a local Aboriginal business. In the beginning, ICEIS took contracts predominantly with other Aboriginal companies providing consulting services. The company then branched out into training for First Nations in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo area.

Massey Whiteknife

"I had a vision to expand my business to a one-stop facility to provide safety officers, training and safety supplies," said Whiteknife. Within two years, ICEIS Safety was providing safety training courses to over 25 Aboriginal communities and was managing over 10 Aboriginal-owned companies, ensuring they met industry standards for contracts on major oil sands sites.

As a safety professional, Whiteknife always ensures clients are made aware of best practices and ways in which to improve their safety standards on the worksite. His approach includes notification to clients that good practices require a significant employer commitment, safety analysis to identify hazards and the implementation of regular safety and health training, all in an effort to foster a culture of safety in the workplace.

Whiteknife is passionate about being a spokesperson for Aboriginal businesses to help them build relationships with larger corporations and connect with industry. He is also passionate about supporting Aboriginal people and communities to reach their full potential. Most participants in Whiteknife's safety training programs are Aboriginal, and this ensures Aboriginal people are ready for work on the various industry job sites.

Whiteknife and ICEIS Safety go further in their commitment to support Aboriginal people and communities. Through the Get Ready program, at-risk Aboriginal youths and young adults participate in a suite of safety training courses so that they may overcome barriers to employment and achieve long-term success in the workforce.

"My trainers go into their community and give at-risk youth and young adults the opportunity to obtain the skills to enter the workforce," said Whiteknife.

This training enables them to take advantage of the opportunities offered through the thriving oil and construction industries, many of which operate in or near their local communities. The Get Ready program is unique in its focus on longevity in the workplace and on call guidance support.

Whiteknife also offers the CSO Mentorship Program, which enables people to become Certified Construction Safety Officers. It offers support such as job readiness training and mentorship.

Whiteknife was named the winner of the Alberta Chambers of Commerce and the Canada Youth Business Foundation's 2011 Youth Entrepreneur Award of Distinction. He says he owes his success to the ongoing support he gets from his mother, to the people and organizations that give him a chance and to the loyal hardworking group of employees (14 in total) that he calls his family.

ICEIS SAFETY

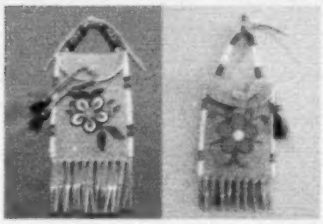
THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION
Eagle Feather Award finalist

MOONSTONE CREATION

Aboriginal art knows no boundaries

The power of art is experienced by the artisan and those who enjoy its beauty. Since European contact, Aboriginal art has been revered as a gift that takes great skill. Those blessed with such gifts are taught to pass on their teachings to others and this is exactly what Yvonne Jobin does. Currently living in Calgary, Jobin is a proud Cree originally from High Prairie, Alberta. Her passion as a traditional artist, designer and spiritualist is evident in all that she does.

Moonstone Creation is a positive representative of Aboriginal art and cultural teachings as a retail outlet and by facilitating workshops for those seeking a more meaningful life by having a deeper understanding of the ways of our ancestors. "Much of our clientele are corporations requiring authentic native-made products for gifting and our motto is 'we represent local native artists' and create much of the art ourselves which is created in our studio in the back of the gallery; you can't get any more local than that," said owner and operator Yvonne Jobin.

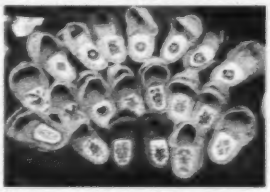


Strike-a-lite pouches

As a businesswoman, Jobin helps to promote local artisans who may not have opportunities to promote their work. Jobin also offers Aboriginal awareness sessions and is innovative in her outreach through the use of technology. The store is outfitted to take orders online. Another example of her use of technology is how she shares her gift of hide tanning, which is available online through EBook.

"We have become known for the quality products we offer to collectors and admirers of native art, both locally and internationally. Through our website we take orders throughout North America using PayPal and many foreign tourists come in to find gifts to take home," said Jobin.

Passing on her traditional knowledge, while adapting to modern technology, she reaches out to as many people as she can, including youth who are essential in keeping the traditions alive. "I have strived to bring native arts and crafts to a place of being recognized as a valuable art form and in doing so hope to inspire other Aboriginal artists and youth that you can carve a niche for yourselves in the world by Creating one Bead at a Time," said Jobin.



Moccasins

In addition to her artistic abilities, Jobin shares her Aboriginal cultural teachings with others. As a seminar leader and teacher for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals alike, she is dedicated to preserving and teaching her culture through the arts and with the use of authentic materials of her ancestors.

She offers a variety of sessions: beading, hand-drum making, porcupine quillwork, and more. Participants get to learn a new skill while enjoying the traditional teachings. Many find it relaxing. One of the main teachings Jobin offers is on the Medicine Wheel, which teaches people to find a balance in the four aspects of their being: emotional, physical, mental and spiritual.

Jobin is proud to have her work used traditionally, by collectors, museums and major motion pictures. Her work is in private and public collections in Canada, United States and Europe and will continue to develop a high profile within the artistic community.

"It is an honor to be nominated for this award and I graciously accept it not only for myself but for the ancestors that came before me who literally gave their arts and crafts away because there was so little value placed on them," said Jobin.

Those who have had the opportunity to meet Jobin are grateful for her vision, knowledge and passion. Her work touches all who connect with her spiritual journey.

Moonstone Creation

THE ALBERTA BUSINESS AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

Eagle Feather Award finalist

NIWIHCIHAW ACCEPTANCE LTD.

Economic possibilities lead to financial empowerment for Aboriginals

Established in 1987, Niwihcihaw Acceptance Ltd. initially provided personal consumer loans to Ermineskin Cree Nation members, using their oil royalty distribution as repayment. The chief and council wanted to assist their members in obtaining loans because of their hardships in being granted loans from other financial institutions. In Cree, Niwihcihaw means 'helping hands,' which is exactly what this company provides.

Over time the company has expanded its services to non-band employees, and other First Nation communities and agencies, which has proven to be beneficial for the company and the clients they serve. Today clients include Montana Cree Nation, Enoch Cree Nation, Alexander Cree Nation and Maskwacis Health Services. Last year Niwihcihaw proudly celebrated its 25-year anniversary.

Niwihcihaw Acceptance Board of Directors

Niwihcihaw's mandate is to promote positive economic growth and self sufficiency by providing First Nation individuals and communities access to financial services. Niwihcihaw believes in inspiring clients to explore new economic development possibilities that, in the long run, will benefit them and their families.

Niwihcihaw creates a respectful and understanding environment for its First Nations clients. Staff is knowledgeable of the Cree culture, which enhances a sense of community belonging, and is helpful when explaining financial processes.

"Clients who previously did not believe this process was accessible to them were overwhelmed when they realized that they are indeed capable of managing their finances appropriately, have a good credit rating, and achieve a good standard of living," said General Manager

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(Continued from page 7)

Geraldine Hill. "With respect, trust and support, financial success becomes possible."

The company created a community support fund to be able to give back to the community through donations and sponsorship. Niwihcihaw is involved with local National Aboriginal Day celebrations each June, annual powwows and Christmas holidays. "We hope that through the recognition and support of community members, community culture, events, gatherings, programs and services, we can ensure the ongoing positive relationship between Niwihcihaw Acceptance Ltd. and the members of Ermineskin Cree Nation into the future," said Hill.

Niwihcihaw Acceptance staff

Niwihcihaw plans to expand by offering services to other First Nations in Alberta and further develop the recently approved Niwihcihaw Community Support Foundation. This foundation, which includes community members and clients from other First Nations, will assist the Ermineskin Cree Nation community as a whole through donations and sponsorships.

"Our company places a high value on the ability of our First Nations peoples to achieve personal and community financial success that opens the door to meaningfully engage with the wider economy and promote independence," said Hill.

Last fall, Niwihcihaw Acceptance Ltd. received the Economic Development award at the 19th Annual Nation Building Capacity – Building Communities Conference hosted in Nova Scotia. This year, Niwihcihaw is grateful to be nominated for an Alberta Business Award of Distinction, which helps to further promote the company.

As an accredited member of the Better Business Bureau, this resilient company continues to grow stronger, rising above challenges, while creating new economic development opportunities. Niwihcihaw continues to offer 'helping hands' in order to meet the needs of its members and welcomes other interested First Nations to benefit from its financial services.

cando
Inspiring Success

Cando has been providing excellence in Aboriginal economic development for over 20 years. Cando is an organization with a national reputation that provides training and skills unique to building economic capacity in Aboriginal communities.

We are committed to not only being the leader in programs and services for economic development officers, but enhancing training opportunities for future Economic Development Officers. Our vision continues to be to strengthen Aboriginal economies and that begins at all levels of training. Our vision is "To build capacity which strengthens Aboriginal economies by providing programs and services to Economic Development Officers."

Once again, Cando has coordinated the nominations and finalists selection process for the two Alberta Business Awards of Distinction sponsored by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada: the Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice Award of Distinction and the Eagle Feather Business Award of Distinction.

Cando would also like to personally congratulate all the nominees and the finalists. Your entrepreneurship and achievements make us very proud.

Please address all letters, comments and requests to:

Aboriginal Business: Celebrated in Alberta
Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
Alberta Region
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9700 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5J 4G2

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